



Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

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FACT SHEET

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Warfighter Refractive Eye Surgery Program

Military personnel perform their duties in a variety of operational environments that may not be ideal situations for the wear of eyeglasses or contact lenses. For this reason, the Department of Defense has approved the Warfighter Refractive Eye Surgery Program.

Refractive eye surgery is a state-of-the-art medical resource that enhances military readiness. Corrective eye surgery that improves vision has been shown to improve a service member's confidence and effectiveness.

Because demand for the procedure far exceeds refractive eye surgery resources, the Chief of Staff of the Army directed that major unit commanders prioritize soldiers according to defined operational readiness guidelines.

This program is completely voluntary. Family members and retirees are not eligible for this program.

Guidelines

Who is Eligible?

- Soldiers with at least 18 months remaining on active duty at the time of surgery or in conjunction with an executed reenlistment action are eligible.
- Selected personnel should have at least 12 months remaining in the same unit or similar unit and have no adverse personnel actions pending.
- Selected soldiers will be removed from the waiting list should their circumstances change causing them not to meet all the guidelines.

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DoD Priorities

1. Soldiers assigned to a unit whose mission involves operations at the line of battle or behind hostile lines. Special operations and combat arms units such as Infantry, Field Artillery, and Armor battalions have first priority.
2. Combat Service Support unit personnel in present assignments in a division or separate brigade have second priority.
3. Other active duty service members when space is available.

What is LASIK Surgery?

The most commonly performed eye surgery to correct vision problems is "laser assisted in situ keratomileusis" (LASIK). In this procedure, the doctor uses a micro cutting instrument to create a flap in the outermost layer of the cornea. The flap is folded back, and then a computer-guided laser re-shapes the surface of the cornea beneath the flap. This re-shaping is called photoablation. The flap is then replaced on the cornea. Most patients recover quickly from this procedure, often seeing much better without glasses within one day.

What is PRK Surgery?

PRK stands for Photorefractive Keratectomy. The procedure re-shapes the surface of the cornea in the same way as LASIK with photoablation. However, a flap is not created. Instead, the surgeon removes the outer skin of the cornea. The laser re-shapes the corneal surface. PRK patients take longer to recover and are usually functional after the third postoperative day. Vision gradually improves further over several weeks.

Who can perform these surgeries?

Ophthalmologists are eye surgeons with medical degrees who perform the surgical procedures. Optometrists are specialists in the treatment of eye and vision disorders who may participate in the care of soldiers before and after laser surgery but do not perform the surgery.

Registration

Soldiers must register on-line at Darnall Medical Center's web site, www.hood-meddac.army.mil, by clicking on the Appointments link.

A request for an appointment through the internet does not guarantee a soldier an appointment. Soldiers not contacted within 60 days of the initial application should review the criteria, be sure all are met and reapply.

These surgeries are currently being offered by all branches of the military at medical treatment facilities around the county and in Europe.

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